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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 KATHMANDU 001334

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [PTER](#) [MARR](#) [KOCI](#) [NP](#)

SUBJECT: NEPAL: REINTEGRATION OF EX-COMBATANTS A WORK IN
PROGRESS

REF: A. KATHMANDU 1204

[1](#)B. KATHMANDU 1314

[1](#)C. KATHMANDU 1298

Classified By: A/DCM Robert L. Hugins. Reasons 1.4 (b/d).

Summary

[1](#)1. (SBU) Representatives from several child-focused international NGOs reported to Emboffs in late June that they and other similar NGOs under the leadership of the UN Children's Fund were poised to assist with reintegration of former Maoist child combatants. They had devised a standard reintegration package and had divided up responsibility for different parts of the country among themselves. Debate continued, however, over how a separate Government of Nepal assistance package would be administered. The NGO representatives indicated that planning and preparation for reintegration of other types of Maoist "combatants," including new recruits who were found to be ineligible to remain in the camps, was lagging. The participants also highlighted that roughly 40 percent of the Maoist People's Liberation Army (PLA) were women. Addressing reintegration of the children and new recruits expelled from the camps during the verification process represents only the first phase of future reintegration efforts and even more difficult issues with former PLA militia remain to be tackled.

NGOs Planning for Reintegration of Children

[1](#)2. (SBU) In a meeting in late June, representatives from Save the Children, the International Rescue Committee (IRC), and World Education explained to Emboffs that, under the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) chairmanship, a Children Associated with Armed Groups and Armed Forces Working Group (CAAFAG) had been meeting regularly over the past nine months to plan for reintegration of former Maoist child combatants. CAAFAG had devised a standard reintegration package for children that included formal education and/or income generation activities and material support (not cash) for the children to re-establish themselves in their communities. Responsibility for different geographic zones of the country had been divided up among the CAAFAG member NGOs. However, the World

Education representative reported that his organization would not be responsible for a zone, but would instead provide technical assistance to UNICEF on education modules for the children. The NGO representatives highlighted that their reintegration efforts focused both on children (under 18) who would be released from the camps through the verification process, as well as the hundreds of children who had already left the cantonments or who were never cantoned.

GON Has Its Own Reintegration Package for Children

13. (SBU) The NGO representatives highlighted that the standard CAAFAG donor package for released child combatants was different from a planned Government of Nepal (GON) package. Debate within the GON continued over how the GON assistance package of NR 80,000 (approximately USD 1,230) would be distributed to each child. CAAFAG had made recommendations to the GON and to the UN Mission in Nepal, including steps to ensure transparency and avoid direct payment to the children, but the NGO representatives expressed concern that the GON had not sufficiently thought through the possible implications of the distribution process.

Minimal Access to Camps But Camp Mobility High

14. (SBU) The NGO representatives told Emboff that, of the various child protection agencies, UNICEF was the sole organization with access to the camps, although even UNICEF fell under UNMIN's umbrella. For example, all UNICEF staff visiting the camps were required to wear UNMIN T-shirts (although they were permitted to wear UNICEF caps). The NGO representatives conceded that, out of necessity, they had

KATHMANDU 00001334 002 OF 003

relied on information from UNICEF and the UNMIN team in designing their programs. The Save the Children representative emphasized that mobility in and out of the camps was high; those cantoned came and went as they pleased. Without a fence or barrier, it was difficult to keep track of combatant movement to and from local communities.

Ensuring Children Are Not Re-Recruited

15. (SBU) Emboff asked how the NGOs were protecting against the re-recruitment of children into the Maoist Young Communist League (YCL) or other armed groups. The Save the Children representative responded that they were monitoring recruitment within communities and working with child protection committees at the Village Development Committee (VDC) level. Community sensitization, IRC said, would be essential to ensure sustainable reintegration of former child combatants. IRC described a program underway to use "foster families" as a "half-way home" for child combatants until they were able to re-establish themselves in their communities.

What About New Recruits? And Women?

16. (SBU) When asked what plans were in place for reintegration of other, non-child "combatants" expelled from the camps during verification, the NGO representatives replied that no coordination mechanism similar to CAAFAG existed for new recruits or others who did not qualify to remain in the camps. However, the UN Development Program (UNDP) would likely take the lead. The NGOs also reported that the debate within the GON on how to handle reintegration packages for non-child combatants continued. All of the NGOs present expressed a willingness to look at reintegration programming for a wider cross-section of those deemed ineligible to remain in the camps, but as U.S. organizations, they needed further guidance on how to stay within the parameters of the U.S. law banning material support to the

Maoists as a designated terrorist group. The participants also highlighted that roughly 40 percent of the Maoist People's Liberation Army (PLA) were women and there had been recent reporting of numerous pregnancies in the camps. To date, there was no clear strategy on how to handle the reintegration of women.

And then Reintegration of Ex-PLA? Militia?

17. (C) A recent USAID funded report by the Academy for Educational Development (AED) addresses an even more challenging integration question, namely integration of Maoist PLA into the Nepal Army (NA). The report noted that integration of the PLA into a "New Nepal Army" figured prominently in the peace negotiations in late 2006. The November peace agreements, however, were vague on the topic. The agreements only mentioned that persons discharged from the camps would be ineligible for later integration and called for a special committee on integration and rehabilitation of Maoist combatants (Ref B). The report went on to point out that, with 95,000 plus soldiers, many observers believe that the NA was already bloated. However, according to AED, the PLA is of the view that a new national army should include roughly half of their combatants, ranging upward from 30,000, including representation at leadership levels. Meanwhile, the NA has repeatedly argued that the Maoists should be allowed to join the NA only if they meet basic recruitment standards. The Chief of the Army Staff, taking a hard position, argues that integration of Maoists into the NA should not occur for at least five years. AED also reported that the NA believes that the PLA is pushing for military integration to undermine the capacity of the Army.

Comment

18. (C) The UN Mission in Nepal's work to verify the 30,000

KATHMANDU 00001334 003 OF 003

Maoist "combatants" is currently on hold. On June 30, Maoist Chief Pushpa Dahal ("Prachanda") demanded that the process be suspended after UNMIN provided the details of its examination of the members of the Maoist First Division in Eastern Nepal.

According to sources at UNMIN, the Maoists balked because UNMIN had disqualified larger numbers of the alleged combatants than the Maoist anticipated on the grounds that they were new recruits or children. If the process resumes, thousands of children and new recruits who are deemed ineligible to remain in the cantonments will require reintegration options. The progress made by CAAAG is heartening. However, if the needs of new recruits remain unaddressed, they could pose one of the largest threats to security in the lead-up to the Constituent Assembly election.

These unemployed and recently trained, largely young, men and women represent ideal recruits for the Young Communist League and other armed groups. Addressing the initial wave of those expelled through verification marks only the beginning of the challenges for Nepal.

19. (C) An immense hurdle looms ahead, as those combatants remaining in the cantonment camps, Maoist militia and other former fighters, seek options for a return to civilian life or integration into GON security forces. Demobilization, disarmament, and reintegration experience worldwide points to the need to tailor reintegration packages to fit local economies and the needs of ex-combatants to protect against re-recruitment and further conflict. These packages must include plans for women combatants and the Maoist militia. A first step would be to encourage UNDP to undertake a multi-donor assessment on reintegration options (Ref C). Post will urge the new special committee on integration to operate in a transparent manner, focusing on democratization of the security forces, but avoiding any co-option of the Army for Maoist political aims. Unless and until Maoist

change their behavior and renounce violence, we can see only token integration of combatants into the NA. Post will also push for greater international pressure and support on devising viable options to transition former combatants.

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